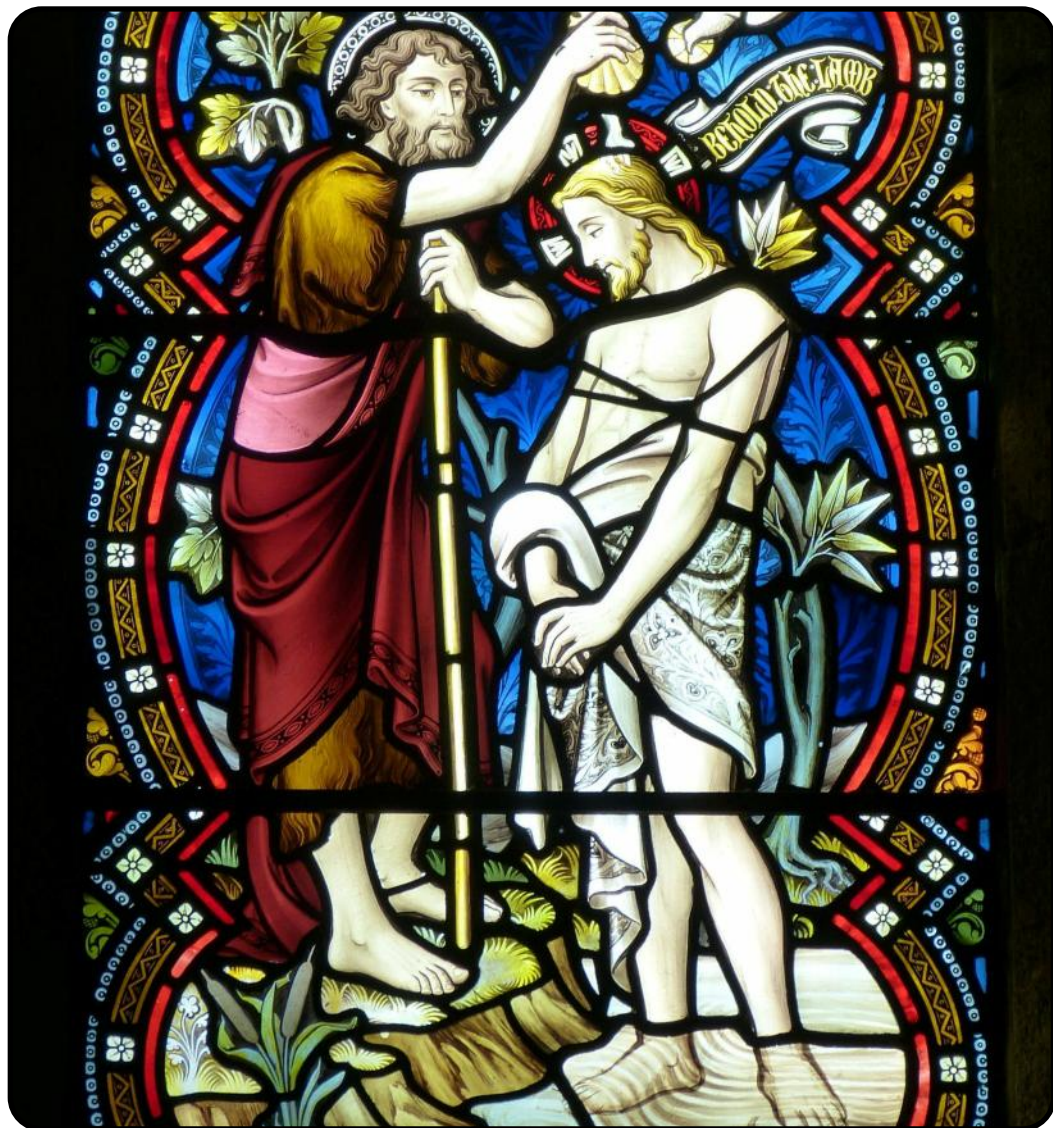


SOLIHULL PARISH

NEWS



TEAM CHURCHES

St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RQ

St HELEN - St Helen's Road, Solihull B91 2DA

St MICHAEL - Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS



Sunday services are:-

St Alphege

8.00 a.m. Said Holy Communion
10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:
Second Sunday - 9.15 a.m. All Age Eucharist and 11.00 a.m. Sung Eucharist
5.00 p.m. Sung Evensong

The Junction

9.15 a.m. In person in the OBH on 16th and 30th January
On Zoom 23rd January

St Helen

10.00 a.m. Eucharist

St Michael at Sharmans Cross School from 3rd October

10.30 a.m. Eucharist

Friday

9.30 a.m. **Praise and Play** – please e-mail: l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk

Full details available on the homepage of our parish website at: <https://www.solihullparish.org.uk>

Please don't hesitate to contact the Parish Office if you need any support or advice. It is always a pleasure to talk to you.

The Revd. Simon Marshall
The Revd. Sue Chandler

WEDDING AND BAPTISM ENQUIRIES

Please contact the Parish Office:

office@solihullparish.org.uk

0121 705 5350

**If you need help of any kind, please
do phone the pastoral care helpline:
0121 661 6343.**

One of us is on duty each day.

C o n t e n t s

Editorial	2
Roundabout	4
Let us Pray	10
News from Team Churches	11
St Alphege	11
St Helen	18
St Michael	20
The Guardians of St Alphege	14
Music Matters	16
Pioneer Diary	22
Church for Families	25-28
Youth Stuff	30
Matters of Faith	46
For Your Diary	50
Address Book	52



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Cover picture

'The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist

Matthew Chapter 3 vv. 13 - 17'

Visit our Website

www.solihullparish.org.uk

Want to email the Editor?

parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk

H e a d l i n e s

St. Alphege CE Federation of Schools Public Consultation on Admission Arrangements for 2013-24	4
News from St. Alphege Schools	5
A Message from the Editor	5
Journey to the Stable 2021	6
#Toys4Bham 2021	8
Mothers' Union	9
Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy	19
Parish of Solihull - Update from the Parish Wardens	24
Confirmation held at St, Alphege on Advent Sunday	34
A Letter to the Parish from our New Director of Music and Organist	38
Friends of St. Alphege Music	42

Editorial

The feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th. 'Epiphany' in Greek means 'manifestation' and is understood to be the proclamation of Jesus to the Gentiles. It brings to an end the traditional twelve days of Christmas and celebrates the visit by the wise men. But Epiphanytide continues for the rest of the month and during this period we celebrate the Baptism of Christ, the miracle performed by Jesus at Cana in Galilee and the Conversion St. Paul. We end with Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, which may be regarded as the halfway point between Christmas and Easter.

During Epiphanytide, we celebrate how Jesus is shown to us in scripture and reflect on where he is visible in our lives. It represents a continued celebration of the Christmas message. To see anything, we need light. When Jesus was born, He was "the true light which lightens everyone coming into the world" (John 1: 9) To see God, we need God's own light: the light that shines out from Jesus Christ, cleanses our darkness, illuminates our hearts, and increases our love and understanding.

January also represents the door of the year. The ancients used the image of Janus, the two-faced God, looking backwards as well as forwards. And inevitably, in the first month of the calendar year, we are bound to reflect on the previous twelve months, recalling the achievements and disappointments they have brought, as well as hoping for better things to come.

It is probably best not to dwell too long on past disappointments. We have experienced too many, not just last year but in recent past years. The world all of a sudden seems to be a more dangerous and uncertain environment. But in 2021 there were also signs of hope: the success, so far, of the vaccination programme against COVID 19 and the partial lifting of restrictions, together with the fact that the COP26 Conference ended in agreement, if not on quite so many targets as many wanted.

Looking to 2022, we must hope that the latest mutations in the COVID virus do not wipe out all the gains made through vaccinations and restrictions and that we can still keep on the road back to normality. We must also hope for more progress on the protection of the environment, and on addressing the plight of refugees throughout the world, including those who seek admission to the UK. In this parish, we continue to pray that the interregnum may be brought to an end with the appointment of an incumbent able to unite us and inspire us to bring the Gospel to the people of Solihull. Meanwhile, let us strive to make even more progress on restoring the worship, pastoral care and evangelism which we enjoyed before the present troubles began. And so we remember in our prayers all those, clerical and lay, who officiate at our services throughout the Parish, who are responsible for the day to day running of the Parish and who volunteer in any way in the service of Almighty God.

Stephen Linstead

The Grove Residential Home (Solihull)

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St Alphege CE Federation of Schools

Public Consultation on Admission Arrangements for 2023-24

In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021, **St Alphege CE Federation of Schools** is required to consult on its arrangements at least every seven years or where changes to the arrangements are proposed.

Our draft Admissions Policy for the academic year 2023-24 is available to view on our website at <https://www.stalphege.solihull.sch.uk/admissions/> and a copy is available from the school office.

Please note that we are proposing no major changes to our admissions criteria but there are some changes to definitions and explanations and to the Supplementary Information Form. The proposed changes in the Policy are shown highlighted in yellow.

Comments are welcome on any aspect of our admission arrangements and can be sent via email to Alison Vining, Clerk to the Governing Body at avining@solgrid.org.uk or directly to the School in a sealed envelope marked Consultation on Admission Arrangements, for the attention of Alison Vining, Clerk to the Governing Body.

This consultation process will commence on **6th December 2021** and conclude on **17th January 2022**. Once the consultation has closed, comments and feedback will be considered by the Governors.

Alison Vining

Clerk to the Governing Body

St Alphege Pre-school

Pre-school places are available for children who will turn 3 years of age in the academic year beginning in September each year. St. Alphege Pre-school offers highly experienced and qualified staff. The last two Ofsted Inspection results rated us 'Outstanding'. Please see web-site for further information www.stalphege-preschool.org.uk – or email Tammy Ellender, Manager: manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk Application forms available from the Oliver Bird Hall or email the Admissions Secretary – admissions@stalphege-preschool.org.uk for a copy.

Wraparound

We also offer a wraparound service for nursery Children attending St Alphege Nursery. Email: Tammy Ellender: manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk

No1 Club

Before and afterschool club is held at OBH by highly qualified staff offering a range of activities for all. Tammy Ellender: manager@stalphege-preschool.co.uk or No1club@stalphege-preschool.org.uk

News from the St. Alphege Schools

Junior School Carol Service 6th December

The St. Alphege Junior School Carol Service was held in St. Alphege Church on Monday, 6th December. Concern about the new Covid variant meant that the size of the congregation had to be reduced, but all the parents of children taking part in the play or Songsquad were able to attend. Miss Allison Taylor, in charge of music for the Schools, directed Songsquad, which had grown back to its pre-pandemic size and quality, and Chris Thomas, St. Alphege's new Director of Music, accompanied both the choir and the congregational carols on organ and piano. Fr. Simon conducted the service which told the



Christmas story through re-enactment, Bible readings and traditional carols. At the end Mr. Morrissey, the Headteacher, took the opportunity to thank the teachers and other school staff, the children, the parents, Governors and Fr. Simon and the Parish for all their support during the last very difficult twenty months and to remind everyone to remember the true meaning of Christmas. He wished everyone a peaceful and happy holiday.

A Message from the Editor

Readers will now be aware that we have reluctantly been forced to increase the price of Parish News. The price had remained at 50 pence since 2004, but in the intervening years prices and wages have risen and we cannot operate at a loss. With the profits from advertising, profits which have of course decreased during recent lockdowns, we have purchased a number of items related to communications in the Parish. Happily, feedback from you has been very positive about the new colour version. So, the new price per edition will be £1 (very much in line with similar magazines) and £10 for a year's subscription.

Please remember that we welcome news items about events in the Parish with photographs, but if possible please send these as jpgs, which makes high resolution reproduction much simpler.

We sincerely thank all our regular contributors for their support.

We wish you all a very happy and peaceful New Year, free of Covid infections.

Carol Southworth

Journey to the Stable 2021

In December 2020 the Journey to the Stable event for local schools wasn't able to happen in person, but instead a video was produced, and craft packs were delivered to the schools so that they could still participate in the Journey, albeit in a very different way to previous years.

During the week leading into Advent 2021 it was such a joy to be able to welcome local schools and pre-school children back into St. Alphege church in person to participate in the Journey to the Stable. It was clear from the reaction of teachers, helpers, parents and pupils how much it meant to them to be able to be in the church building. In order to be Covid compliant the sessions ran a little differently to previous years, but that didn't seem to detract at all from how the Christmas story was brought to life for the children.

At the start of the session the children sat in the pews to listen to the Christmas story told using the Crib figures. They then wrote their names and school on a shape to be added to a display board at the back of church and then made a bookmark to take home to remind them of their visit. The children then moved



Children who attended Journey to the Stable wrote their names on stars which are now on a board in church



forward to sit on the floor ready to meet some characters who would help them imagine what it was like on that first

Christmas Day. The children first met

a Shepherd who told the story of an incredible night when he and his friends had been out on the hillside as usual caring for their sheep when they were astounded to be visited by angels telling them to go to Bethlehem. A Wise Man then joined the Shepherd to tell the children about his long journey with his friends following a star and talked about the gifts they had chosen. The children then met the very grumpy Innkeeper's wife, who after being given some money to help pay for her fuel bills, was persuaded to sit down to tell the children about all the visitors to her stable. The manger was then brought forward, and two children from each school were invited forward to be Mary and Joseph and share their story.





The children then enthusiastically shared their thoughts on the most enjoyable part of the session, the part that was most important to them and why it was important and whether any part of the Christmas story could be left out and we would still have all the story we needed. It was wonderful to hear the children's thoughts and for each session the conclusion was that all parts of the story were important, and nothing could be taken away.

The Journey to the Stable would not be possible without the help and support of a team of wonderful volunteers who willingly give their time and many talents to make this event happen. **A BIG THANK YOU** to all of them!!

Linda Hicks

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Roundabout

#Toys4Bham 2021

In 2020 Thrive Together Birmingham, a joint venture charity of the Church of England Birmingham and Church Urban Fund, responded to a plea from Birmingham's Children's Centres to help collect gifts to keep Christmas special for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Birmingham and 16,500 toys and gifts were collected via a donation centre at Edgbaston Stadium.



In 2021 even more families have been driven into hard times and so the people of Birmingham and surrounding areas were again asked to dig deep to help families struggling to afford the essentials and who simply cannot afford to buy presents for their children.



Families in the Solihull Parish responded generously to the request for help, and it was fantastic to be able to deliver a car full of toys and books to the Edgbaston stadium which were very gratefully received by the enthusiastic team of volunteers.



Thank you so much to everyone who responded to the appeal for help.

Linda Hicks

Mothers' Union Advent Lunch and Meditation

Forty-five members and friends enjoyed a festive Advent Lunch in early December in the OBH. It was followed by a Meditation led by Fr. Sam Gibson. We had mulled wine, soup, sandwiches and home-made desserts, and then tea/coffee with mince pies after the meditation.

The meditation was on the Advent theme of childbirth and waiting for the arrival of a baby. Fr. Sam illustrated his talk with pictures of icons, showing Jesus in his mother's womb, some in various stages of childhood. It was lovely to see Fr. Sam again - he is obviously enjoying his ministry in Edgbaston.

After the meditation, we celebrated Beryl Boulter's 90th birthday with a cake and candles (not 90!).



It was a great afternoon. It is so good to be able to meet and enjoy fellowship after the dark days of 2021. We have a new programme for 2022; let's hope that we will be free to meet.



January Meeting

Thursday 6th January will be our Annual General Meeting when Chris Thorp retires as Leader after 6 years, and Susan Haigh will take over as St. Alphege Branch Leader.

The AGM starts at 1:30p.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall, and after the meeting Alison Pratt will give a talk on the subject '*Nursing through the Years*'.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WELCOME AT ALL OUR MEETINGS

We can arrange lifts - contact Elaine (705 3265) Pat (705 8761) or Julia (744 3540).

Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for January 2022

1	The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus	For the newly born	Gilmorton Close
2	Christmas 2 / Epiphany	For the spread of the Gospel to all nations	Glaston Drive
3	Feria	For our archbishops and bishops	Glebe Road
4	Feria	For our clergy	Glenfield Close
5	Feria	For our readers	Grandborough Drive
6	The Epiphany	For a successful end to the interregnum	Grange Road
7	Feria	For doctors and health workers	Greswolde Road
8	Feria	For our wardens	Greyhurst Croft
9	The Baptism of Christ	For those about to be baptised	Grove Avenue
10	William Laud Archbishop of Canterbury, 1645	For the Anglican Communion	Grove Road
11	Mary Slessor, Missionary in West Africa, 1915	For Christians in Africa	Habberley Croft
12	Aelred of Hexham, Abbot of Rievaulx, 1167	For the northern province	Hainfield Drive
13	Hilary Bishop of Tours, 367	For the Church in France	Halford Road
14	Feria	For our youth and children's workers	Halstead Grove
15	Feria	For all responsible for music in the Parish	Hampton Lane
16	The Second Sunday of Epiphany	For our PCC and DCCs	Hartwell Close
17	Anthony of Egypt, Hermit, Abbot 356	For contemplative religious	Haseley Road
18	Amy Carmichael, Spiritual Writer, 1951	For Christians in India	Heath Gardens
19	Wulfstan Bp of Worcester 1095	For the Diocese of Worcester	Heath Road
20	Richard Rolle, spiritual writer 1349	For Christian writers	Heathcote Avenue
21	Agnes, Child Martyr at Rome 304	For Those persecuted for their faith	Heaton Road
22	Vincent of Saragossa, Deacon, First Martyr of Spain 304	For the Church in Spain	Henley Crescent
23	The Third Sunday of Epiphany	For our Parish Office and Verger	Henwood Lane
24	Frances de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Teacher 1622	For the gifts of patience and gentleness	Herbert Road
25	The Conversion of Paul	For the conversion of those who know not Christ	Hermitage Road
26	Timothy and Titus, companions of Paul	For our Pioneer Minister	Heronfield Way
27	Feria	For all volunteers in the parish	Heyford Grove
28	Thomas Aquinas, philosopher, teacher 1274	For theologians	High Street
29	Feria	For those carrying out pastoral care in the parish	Hillfield Mews
30	The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany / Presentation of Christ in the Temple	For young children and their parents	Hillfield Road
31	Feria	For Marie Curie and all hospices	Hollings Grove

The Church prays for the community daily: please include these topics in your personal daily prayers.

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

Zach Marshall Robert Turton, Ethan Jude Fisher,
Matthew Robert Wong, Charles Edward Phillips-Schofield,
Chloe & Eloise Taylor, Perseus Gordon Tibbatts-Law,
Millie Rose Grice.

Weddings

None

Funerals

6th December Diana Josephine Flynn
20th December Norman Davies
21st December Linda Fumagalli

Memorial Services

David Henry Bradnock

Interments

Bradley Hall
Margaret Doreen Dallow

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in January

Ronald Soden	Ronald Metcalfe	Katherine Davis
Ann Simcock	Peggy Turner	Betty Hartley
Mary Feldman	Maud Dunkley	Noreen Sheehy
Margaret Tate	John Flood	Dorothy Smith
Kathleen Dumigan	Elsie Flood	Dorethea Hobbs
Nellie Kemp	Alison Peat	Elizabeth Newton
Stan Jones	Jim Madeley	Michael Southworth
Clive Thwaite Williams	Edwin Barnes	Elsie Katherine Malpass
George Shirley	Hilda Mary Pinfold	Betty Wood
Lily May Hale	Colin Leach	Tim Berry
Margaret Aston	Robert Davis	
Cecil Campkin	John Barnsley	



Live and streamed services are being held at St. Alphege's, St. Michael's and St. Helen's churches.

Details are inside the front cover of this magazine and on the Parish Website.

<https://www.solihullparish.org.uk>

Worship Notes January 2022

These are the principal festivals in January

1st The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

This feast day, which opens the calendar year, celebrates an event from the life of Jesus, according to the Gospel of Luke chapter 2, which states: 'And when eight days were fulfilled to circumcise the child, **his name was called Jesus**, the name called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.'

6th (may be transferred to 2nd) The Epiphany

Epiphany means 'manifestation' in Greek and celebrates the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles through the visit of the wise men to the Holy Family. Epiphany brings to an end the twelve days celebration of Christmas but also marks the start of Epiphanytide. Christmas and Epiphany together proclaim the incarnation of Jesus.

9th The Baptism of Christ

The baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan is a major event in the life of Jesus which is described in three of the gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Most Christian denominations view the baptism of Jesus as an important event, marking the start of his earthly ministry. It is also regarded as a basis for the Christian rite of baptism.

16th Epiphany 2

The Second Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany.

23rd Epiphany 3

The Third Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany.

25th Conversion of St Paul

This feast marks the event recorded in Acts in which Saul hears a voice from heaven and is struck blind on the way to Damascus. In consequence of this experience, he turns from being a persecutor of Christians to a fervent believer in the Gospel and an apostle to the Gentiles. This is an important episode in the life of the early church.

30th Epiphany 4

This is the last Sunday in Epiphanytide. It may also be celebrated as the Feast of the Presentation.

January 2022 Parish Services

Please note there are no services on Saturday 1st January

Sunday 2nd January – Christmas 2 / Epiphany

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Said Eucharist with hymns
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Said Evensong with hymns
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist

Sunday 9th January – Christmas 3 / Baptism of Christ

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	9.15 a.m.	All Age Eucharist
St. Alphege	11.00 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	All Age

Sunday 16th January – Epiphany 2

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist

Sunday 23rd January – Epiphany 3

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist

Sunday 30th January – Epiphany 4

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Epiphany Vespers
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist

*Please note that **Candlemas** (The Presentation of Christ in the Temple) will be celebrated on **Sunday 6th February**.*



The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

It is probable that many people who read the Parish News have no idea who the **Guardians** are and what they do. So, it seems appropriate to write a brief history.

The **Guardians of St. Alphege Church** was formed in 1981 as a non-denominational registered charity with the object of raising funds to assist with the maintenance and preservation of the fabric of the church. This was for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull and to stimulate interest in the beauty, history and character of **St. Alphege Church**, as one of the oldest and finest buildings in the Borough.

There has been much fundraising over the years, which has allowed us to donate funds to the church to cover various works. The total sum to date is nearly £280,000; this has mainly been spent on windows, roofs, stonework and, the biggest individual cost, the spire. I think it is safe to say that if, in 2007, the **Guardians** had not been here with the funds to repair the spire immediately, the church would have had to close while funds were raised and the work done. The cost was £35,000 and would be a lot more today.

But it does not stop here. Two of the Trustees were given a tour of the church recently and shown what needs to be done soon. There are various repairs needed to such things as stonework and windows. In the next few months you will see evidence of this, as the scaffolding goes up. Including the scaffolding, this will cost many thousands of pounds. We will update you as the work is done.

At the moment the **Guardians** have investments in the region of £600,000, as a result of fundraising and investments. Yes, I know, this sounds a lot, but that will be reduced considerably over the next year. Then, as the repairs and maintenance are on-going, we will continue to reimburse the church for the costs of work, within the remit of the **Guardians**.

Architectural comments have indicated that the current good condition of the Church is due to the preventative maintenance that has been funded over the years by the **Guardians**.

Therefore it is necessary for us to continue our fundraising. Obviously over the last couple of years we have been unable to have any events, but by the time you read this, all being well, we will have had a Coffee Morning and next year we are planning a Wine & Cheese Lunch in early Summer, with other events to follow. Watch this space.

Our fundraising activities continue and are summarised and can be supported in the following ways: -

1. You can become a member of the **Guardians**, for as little as £15.00 subscription per annum for an individual, £20.00 for a couple
2. Support our social activities as advertised in the Parish News and elsewhere.
3. Take advantage of the Church Floodlighting Scheme, as detailed in the Parish News, to celebrate important occasions or remember loved ones on special dates
4. General donations in memory of loved ones, or through gifts and or legacies.

If you would like to join the **Guardians** or just to know more about them, please contact Margaret Oswald 0121 722 4092 or margaretoswald43@gmail.com

Trustees of the Guardians

Floodlighting



The Guardians Floodlighting Scheme is available for anyone who would wish to celebrate or mark an occasion, or to commemorate a date.

The cost is £8.00 for 2 hours; £14.00 for 4 hours. Please give 21 days notice.

Names are published in the Parish magazine and acknowledged with a card sent to the donor.

It may be possible to have the Church floodlit at short notice, but it will not be published in the Parish News until a later date.

For further information please contact the Scheme organiser: -

Sheila Payne, 0121 706 0520 or email: russellpayne110@aol.com

The Church was floodlit to remember the following in 2021:

1 st December	Congratulations to Paul and Alex (néé Jameson) Tregellas on your 14 th wedding anniversary.
4 th December	In loving memory of Michael Edwards.
5 th December	In memory of Angela Jameson devoted wife of John, mother to Alex (and Paul) and Victoria, grandmother to Jamie and Isabelle.
6 th December	Myra Wilson. In memory of a loving mother.
7 th December	To commemorate the marriage on 7 th December 1985 of Wendy and Ted Corbridge.
8 th December	In ever loving memory of the late dearly loved Robert Lamble.
10 th December	Birthday memories of my dear husband Robbie Lamble.
14 th December	To commemorate the birthday of Marjorie Elsie Lane.
14 th December	In loving memory of Malcolm Spence.
14 th December	In loving memory of Mike Southworth on his birthday. A beloved husband, father and grandfather.
15 th December	In loving memory of Dr Oswald.
19 th December	In loving memory of William James Lane.
24 th December	In loving memory of Rachel Elston as this was her favourite time of year.
24 th December	In loving memory of Ronald McDonough.
27 th December	In loving memory of Gwen Mullis.
27 th December	In loving memory of Ron Soden.

Music Matters

Hello everyone.

I hope you are all keeping well and are staying warm in the wintry weather.

November has been a very varied month for the choir with some wonderful events and of course the very exciting news that our new Director of Music, Chris Thomas, has now arrived – just in time for the busy Advent and Christmas season.

At the beginning of November, we participated in the All Souls' Day services, both on All Souls' Day itself (2nd November) and then for the New Door Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance the following Sunday. The choir sang excerpts from the beautiful Requiem by Fauré and we hope that our music enhanced these services and created the right atmosphere for people as they remembered their loved ones.

On Saturday 13th November, a small group of our choristers joined with Solihull Choral Society to perform in their Carmina Burana concert. They also performed a small set of their own, to great acclaim from the audience.



Also in the middle of November, we participated in three very different Remembrance Sunday services. Our Junior Boys and Girls joined the worship band for the All Age service, then our Senior Boys and Girls and Men sang as part of the Civic Service,

both outside at the War Memorial, and for the inside service. Finally, our Ladies sang an upper voices Choral Evensong. It is a privilege to be part of these important services.

Particular thanks are due to Pam Price and David Rice for helping direct the choirs for these important occasions.

The Youth Choir sang at the parish-wide One Light, One Vision service on Sunday 21st November and then at the St. Helen's Christmas Fayre the following Saturday. The Youth Choir is made up of young people who





are at secondary school and university, and their singing was very much appreciated on both occasions.

Chris's second Sunday with us included both the parish Confirmation Service and the Advent Carol Service. Bishop David blessed Chris and formally welcomed him to his new post, and we also made the most of Bishop David being with us by asking him to present two R.S.C.M. Bishop's awards. Normally these are presented at the R.S.C.M. Festival Service in Birmingham Cathedral, but this service has been cancelled for two years now, and these two choristers, who both gained Highly Commended marks, deserved to be presented with their awards, rather than waiting another year.

Although the pandemic is very much still with us, it has been wonderful to participate in these services in person this year, after creating recorded services for all these occasions last year.

We are very much looking forward to preparing the music for the rest of Advent and the Christmas services with Chris, and hope that the emerging situation regarding the new Covid variant of concern can be well managed so that we all stay safe and can enjoy Christmas together.

If anyone wishes to get in touch about choir activities or any of the parish online services, please email Chris Thomas on c.thomas@solihullparish.org.uk or me isabel@solihullparish.org.uk and we will do our best to help.

Take care everyone.

Isabel Baumber

Wednesday Lunchtime Music Recitals, 1.10pm to 2pm

In order to keep everyone safe, masks must be worn and social distancing and other Covid safety measures will be in place. Admission is free of charge and a retiring collection is held in aid of The Friends of St. Alphege Music (registered charity 511237). Please could we ask that you book a place by visiting <https://www.trybooking.co.uk/BBOF>. Tea, coffee and cake are now available.

Isabel Baumber

12 th January	Performer TBC
19 th January	Darach Ensemble
26 th January	Yugen Saxophone Quartet

St. Helen's Christmas Fayre held on Saturday 27th November was a great success, with good sales being made on all stalls. A Human Fruit Machine put together by the Guides & Brownies provided fun to all ages. St. Alphege Choir gave splendid Christmas Music & Carols, and the Solihull Young Dancers provided two excellent dance performances, one Ballet and one Tap Dance. The snowy weather gave a good background to the Christmas theme, albeit unfortunately, it stopped some people from attending. Monies raised will be around £1,900, and will be donated to:-

Zoe's Place

Family Care Trust

Restore (Helping Afghan Refugees)

However, just as pleasing was the parish-wide community spirit which emanated from the event and which was heart-warming; we had amazing support from St. Michael's, and visitors came from all three churches. Many thanks to all concerned.

Cameo held a very happy Christmas gathering on 1st December which was well attended. They were entertained by Christmas singers some of whom enjoyed the event so much that they are going to join the group. As always, all are welcome. The next meeting is 5th January, where the visiting speakers will be *Guide Dogs for the Blind*, hopefully accompanied by at least one canine friend.

We continue to search for a pianist for our Sunday services; if you know of anyone who might be interested, please let us know; a fee will be paid.

We are pleased that some of our old friends are returning to worship; we continue to apply strict cleansing and distancing procedures and masks are still necessary.

We were very saddened by the passing of our dear friend, Andrew Arrowsmith whose funeral was here at St. Helen's on 26th November; our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Judith, and all the family. Andrew will be sadly missed.

Sadly Cecilia Goring passed away in November, and a Thanksgiving Service for Cecilia and George was held on Friday 10th December 2021, our thoughts and prayers are with their family.

We continue to keep Revd. Helen and her family in our prayers and give very grateful thanks to all who are helping us through this very difficult time.

We wish you all a peaceful and healthy New Year.

Jean and Phil

The Office at St. Helen's now has a new e-mail address.

sthoffice@solihullparish.org.uk

Solihull Town Centre Chaplaincy



Here for the people who work in the town
Would you like to join the team?

At her recent chaplaincy commissioning service Audrey, a Solihull team chaplain, explained how on first meeting a workplace chaplain she became aware of the value of such chaplaincy and that when the opportunity arose some years later, she carried out the training course and she went on to say, *'I started by shadowing two chaplains and then when on my own, as I've got to know the retailers, I have built up some good relationships. Some of the retailers have asked for prayer for sick relatives or bereaved families. On one occasion I was invited to share my faith. The retailers look forward to the chaplains giving out Christmas cards and mince pies at Christmas'.*

A listening ear, a smiling face or just a presence, we visit to bring God and to find God in the workplace.

As a chaplain the amount of time that you give is up to you and the times that you visit is up to you - naturally avoiding the busy periods, of course.

There is much more to tell but if you are interested in being a Solihull workplace chaplain then, please get in touch with

[Beryl Moppett 0121 705 0337](mailto:beryl.moppett@gmail.com)
beryl.moppett@gmail.com



Readers

January is the month that those who have undertaken Reader training over the previous couple of years are licensed by the Bishop to exercise their ministry in various churches in Birmingham diocese.

At present there are over 200 Readers with either a full licence or Permission to Officiate. Here in Solihull, we have 5 Readers and one in training. At a quick estimate the Readers have over 100 years of ministry between them.

The two-year training covers a wide range of subjects covering the Bible, theology, church history, and practical matters like delivering a sermon so everyone can hear it, and more importantly understand it. To do this we visited a nearby church in the evening and took turns to preach whilst the others heckled – sorry, rather made constructive comments!

In the final year (at least when I trained) there is the summer project when the group is split into smaller working groups. These groups then find out about each other's churches, interview the vicar, and then write a full report and give a presentation to the whole group.

Somewhat nerve-racking but very enjoyable.

Epiphany

On 6th January, the church celebrates the Epiphany, when the wise men or magi are led to Jesus by a star and bring with them the most famous Christmas presents of all time. How they managed without John Lewis is a mystery to us all!

Although nativity plays tend to amalgamate the magi with the birth of Jesus, the text in Matthew suggests this was some time after, when Jesus was probably one or two years old. By this time Mary and Joseph were married, living in a house, and presumably settled for a while. Again, although nativity plays suggest there were three wise men, scripture doesn't give a number. Call me old-fashioned but I still like the sub-heading in the Book of Common Prayer *The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles*.

However we describe it, it is a lovely feast to celebrate.

I wish you a Happy and Blessed New Year.

Paul Smith

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An Invaluable Lesson from the Woman at the Well

Some years ago, when the first time the (then) new CEO of Church Army came to meet us at our local cluster, he had us spend some time with John 4: 4 – 42, when Jesus meets the woman at the well. **It's too long to print out in full in this article but why not take some time to read it now.** 😊

After we all read it together, he asked us a question: "What do you see happening in this Bible reading?" We dutifully recounted the story, including everything that happened in the text about the Samaritan woman and her visit to the well; how Jesus stopped her in her tracks by asking her for a drink. How she questioned him, and he educated her, until she ran off to tell everyone, "He told me everything I have ever done." The CEO listened to us. Then he said something that I have remembered ever since, and probably will remember for the rest of my days. He said: "Everything that you have listed is true. But the one thing that you haven't listed is this: *that woman, at the well, spent time with Jesus. I'll say that again, she spent time with Jesus. They started a relationship. If you were to ever say to me that you couldn't do something, or couldn't be somewhere, I would excuse you every time if you said it was so that you could spend time with Jesus. There is nothing more important in our lives.*"

The problem is, we can confuse working for Jesus, or reading about Jesus, with spending time with him. Don't get me wrong, we **are** called to work for Jesus, there is nothing wrong with that. And we **are** called to read our Bibles and to read about Jesus' life and work, there is nothing wrong with that either. But having a relationship with Jesus is a priority and working for him and/or reading the Bible and studying his life does not necessarily build that relationship. I liken it to reading someones' autobiography as opposed to being in the same room with them. If you are in the same room together, you can learn more first-hand knowledge about them – you can build a relationship with them. Reading their autobiography, as informative as it might be, does not give you that.

So, how do we grow our relationship with Jesus? How do we spend time with Jesus, just like the woman at the well?

Well, through a wide variety of prayer methods – not just intercessory prayer; through quiet mornings/afternoons/days; through spiritual direction; and through retreats - to name but a few! Granted, in our daily lives some of these are easier than others to take-up and maintain but let me just burst the myth that often pervades these things: these things are appropriate and beneficial to **us all**, not just to those in ministry. Is there something here that interests you? Something that you would like to hear more about. Trust the prompting and do talk to someone about it. If that person isn't the one to be able to give you the information, I would encourage them to pass you on to someone who can.

I could write an article on all these things individually – one of the other hats I wear is that of a trained and experienced spiritual director – and maybe I will, another time. For now, I would like to issue us all a New Year challenge:

When we greet one another throughout 2022, let's begin by asking one another, "*When did you last spend time with Jesus?*" A simple answer could be, "*Thank you for the reminder. How about you?*" Remember, we do this not to stand in judgement over anyone. We do this

so that we are prompted to spend time with Jesus if we haven't lately, and so that we are, as a Christian community, held more mutually accountable to one another.

And don't forget to challenge the ministers in the parish this way too. Whereas some people see these things as a luxury that ministers get to go on – a perk of the job, so to speak – they are far from it. *Would you take directions from someone who never consults the map?* Quite the opposite of a luxury, personal prayer, quiet days, retreats, and spiritual direction are helpful to all but a *necessity* for those who lead others. I would be more worried about those who neglect these areas, or who are in ministry roles and not encouraged in these things. A pertinent question for our new Team Rector candidates, maybe?

Anyway, that's all for now. Wishing you all a blessed 2022 and, just one question –

When did you last spend time with Jesus?

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette.

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Parish of Solihull

Update from the Parish Wardens

November was a busy month, particularly as we had our One Light, One Vision service in St. Alphege Junior School, our Confirmation Service with Bishop David on Advent Sunday, followed by the Advent Carol Service. Journey to the Stable took place in person which has been very much welcomed by the schools and others who have attended. Messy Church is now up and running again at St. Helen's once a month. The St. Helen's Fair was a great success too and drew in many people from the neighbourhood. We are impressed that our Bell Ringers achieved a quarter peel just before the Confirmation Service and we congratulate them for that and thank them for their great work.

December will be even busier as we continue with Advent services and prepare for Christmas with a good number of Carol Services.

Suzette, our Pioneer Minister, is spending quite a lot of time in the Greville Arms running sessions with the Advent book, Humbug and Happiness, and a Beer and Carols evening too. It is good that she is now able to meet people and develop relationships and activities after a very hard time during the pandemic.

Once again St. Helen's will be holding their Outdoor Neighbourhood Carol Service which went so well last year.

It looks as though the advertising for our new Rector will not be able to happen for a few months yet because of various technicalities to do with the future structure of the Parish which the Diocese is working on and so we will continue to need to depend on many volunteers of clergy and lay people to help us through. Once again, we are grateful to everyone who contributes so well to the life of the Parish. We are very pleased that the Venerable Paul Taylor is committed to supporting us for how ever long this process takes and is doing this with Bishop David's authority.

Andy Halstead, Paul Smith and Sand Cooper have done a great job in preparing a draft Parish Profile which will be used to give prospective candidates for Rector a view of what our Parish is like. This was built upon the replies to the consultation that was conducted a few months ago. The Profile has gone to the P.C.C. for discussion and still needs some refinements; we now need to wait for the details of the future structure of the Parish before it can be completed.

As we write, we have been informed that the Planning Application for the Old Rectory site is to be discussed at the Planning Meeting on 8th December but that the Planning Committee is recommending rejection of the plans. This comes as a huge disappointment to those of us who are looking forward to Project Turnaround – our plans for St. Alphege Church and the OBH.

Out of the One Light, One Vision service came our commitments to moving forward by looking outward in mission to people in our Parish, by developing discipleship and finding ways of sharing our faith with others. The prayers and hopes that people wrote at that service are displayed on a large Celtic cross shape that will be circulated round our churches (many thanks to our Youth members for producing this). These are our challenges as we start our new calendar year after the celebrations of our Joy at the Birth of Christ over Christmas.

Pam Price and Andrew Williams
December 2021



CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

January

Sunday Worship

St Alphege

On **9th January** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15am for a very special **Baptism themed All age worship**

On **16th and 30th January** the Junction will meet **IN PERSON** at 9.15am in the Oliver Bird Hall

(An informal service for families of all ages. It's lively and laid back!)

On **23rd January** the Junction will meet **ON ZOOM**
(Contact Linda l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to register to receive the zoom link)

St Helen

Every Sunday at 10.00 am there is worship in a modern space with a community feel with activities available for children.

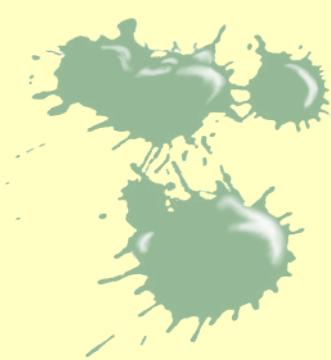
St Michael

Every Sunday in term time at 10.30am there is worship in the school hall where a warm and welcoming space is created for all ages to worship. There is a crèche for little ones and activities for children of all ages.

Other Activities

Friday 21st January **Epiphany Messy Church** St Helen's Church 4-5pm

Praise and Play Every Friday 9.30-10.30am Oliver Bird Hall



Activities for families of all shapes and sizes with lots of hands-on, crafty fun - followed by a celebration including a story and a prayer



4.00pm 'til 5.15pm on Friday

21st January, 18th February, 18th March



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First Communion Preparation



At the heart of worship in the Solihull Parish is the celebration of the meal which Jesus and his disciples shared on the night before he died – the Last Supper. In this act of worship known as Holy Communion, Christians gather to hear the word of God and then share the bread and wine together. For several years the Solihull Parish has prepared children to receive Holy Communion (not the same as confirmation which is offered later) through a course of preparation which involves fun and interactive learning. They are then admitted to receive Holy Communion at a service known as *First Communion Sunday*.

As Holy Communion is so special the bishops have laid down strict guidelines which every parish must follow. These include the following:

1. Children must attend all sessions of the preparation course and worship in the Parish on each of the Sundays during the course.
2. Parents must ensure that the children worship regularly after their *First Communion Sunday* i.e. twice monthly as a minimum.
3. Before admission to Holy Communion each person must be baptized. However, if a child has not been baptized, but wishes to receive Holy Communion, they may begin the course on the understanding that they will be baptized before *First Communion Sunday*.

The dates for 2022 are as follows:

Liturgy of Welcome	9.15a.m. Sunday 13 th February St Alphege Church
Preparation Session 1	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday, 6 th March Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 2	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday, 13 th March Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 3	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday, 20 th March Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 4	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday 3 rd April Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 5	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday 24 th April Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 6	2.30-3.30p.m. Sunday 1 st May Room 1 OBH
First Communion Sunday	9.15a.m. Sunday 8 th May St Alphege Church

For further information or to register contact Linda Hicks

l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk



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If you want to know more ring Linda on

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or e mail l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk

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Happy new year to everyone!

As we start 2022 we are hoping to expand our schedule and start running Youth on Sundays again, as guidance and safety allows obviously. However, for this to happen we need volunteers as second adults in these sessions, and those through the week.

The role is very simple as we need someone to sit in as I or someone runs the sessions; you can be as involved as you wish to be, either just by being in the room, or to get involved with the discussions and activities



Youth session in the St Alphege bell tower



The start of our overnight 'Lock in, Log out' social

gaps. I may be biased but we do have the greatest youth in our parish.

We are also hoping to start to attend the summer festivals again this year on top of the usual socials, such as charity sleepouts, Drayton manor, climbing trips, live music and so much more, it's a very exciting time, so please do keep the youth work and the youth in your prayers as we start to build 2022 into the biggest year yet.

and both are completely fine, however we do need that person both to protect the youth but also the staff.

There is a bit of paperwork and training that needs to happen, but we can discuss that with those that are interested.

It's an extremely valuable role, and is only for an hour a week, or as often as you would like, but please do email and ask any questions you have, we are happy to answer anything and see if you're a good fit for any



Face painting at the St Helens Christmas Fayre

Youth Schedule January 2022

Wednesday 5 th Jan 7-8 p.m.	Junior Refresh - Our Bible study session for Years 6-8, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hal.
Friday 7 th Jan 6-7:30 p.m.	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have pizza.
Monday 10 th Jan 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Wednesday 12 th Jan 7:30-8:45 p.m.	Refresh - Our Bible study session for Years 9 and up, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 14 th Jan 6-7:30pm	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have pizza.
Monday 17 th Jan 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Wednesday 19 th Jan 7-8 p.m.	Junior Refresh - Our Bible study session for Years 6-8, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 21 st Jan 6-7:30 p.m.	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have fun.
Monday 24 th Jan 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Wednesday 26 th Jan 7:30-8:45 p.m.	Refresh - Our Bible study session for Years 9 and up, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 28 th Jan 6-7:30 p.m.	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have pizza.
Monday 31 st Jan 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.

OLIVER BIRD HALL BOOKINGS

Enquiries are welcome for the use of the Hall and meeting rooms for social gatherings, christenings, anniversaries, meetings, etc.

Visit the website on:

www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire

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Tel: 0121 705 5350 Email: office@solihullparish.org.uk

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Confirmation held at St. Alphege on Advent Sunday

We are grateful to Bishop David for conducting our long-awaited Parish Confirmation. It was a lovely time when we welcomed 5 members of our congregations as full members of the church when they confirmed the vows made by their parents and godparents, or, in the case of Cheung, the vows he made himself as he was baptised during the service just before he was confirmed. Bishop David spoke of Advent when we think about Jesus returning at the End Time in judgment and our need to be ready for Him, enjoying the blessings He has given us and not weighed down and trapped by life.



Bishop David with the Confirmands

The 5 candidates, Cheung Liu, Nicoletta Proto, Jill Ridgway, Max Rollinson, and John Smith, all gave moving testimonies of what their faith in Jesus and their Confirmation meant to them and these are printed below. Bishop David challenged us all in Advent to write down our own story of God's working in our life and what He means to us.

The music during the service was inspiring and showed the work of our choirs and organist under the hand of our new Director of Music, Chris Thomas, and it was good that Bishop David was able to bless Chris's ministry to us. Bishop David was also presented the Bishop's Award of the Royal Society of Church Music to two members of our choir, Lily Stanford and Thomas Baumber.

Afterwards we were able to enjoy refreshments and to celebrate this great occasion.

You can see the service on the Parish of Solihull Facebook and YouTube sites.

Testimonies

Cheung Liu

The reason why I chose to be baptised was I felt it was an important step to bring me closer to God.

The last few years have been challenging with personal health issues and now with Covid. Despite that, I felt God was always there for me, being by my side, walking and supporting me all the time. I didn't feel I was facing these challenges on my own.

Through prayer and scripture, I was able to make more sense of the world around me. Christianity was helping me answer some important questions that I had around purpose and what Hope meant.

I felt that Christianity started to anchor me and provide a moral and spiritual compass to help me navigate through the trials and tribulations of daily life.

I think this is only the start of a journey for me.

Nicoletta Proto

Hello, I'm Nicoletta. Although both sides of my family are a part of a different church- my Dad's side the Catholic and my Mum's the Lutheran, they have both grown up with religion and so that is how I have grown up.

Going to St. Helen's Church, the church my mum found just after moving to the UK, and taking me there at 4 months old, has meant I've had a safe place and an amazing community to grow up in, and most importantly, a place for God to be introduced in my life. Having somewhere like that to go to weekly for so many years, means I have always been reminded of how there is something so amazing for me and gives me the opportunity to live my life in His way.



Nicoletta with her Bible, her mother Johanna and Bishop David

Something I believe is important to build a relationship with God, is to have a good understanding of the Bible. Because I pride myself on my art and creativity, a project I had started over the lockdown was Bible journalling. Reading, highlighting and making visual notes on passages has helped me to better understand the Bible and the God that is always there for me. Even during youth sessions, when we are all sitting, talking and reflecting on what we have read, I will be there with my colourful pens noting down my own and other people's thoughts and reflections. This is a form of worship I will continue to carry out and help me even

further in my life as well as strengthen my relationship with God.

A line in one of the many songs of worship I have heard since I was a kid, that my mum played in the car, that Jesus is the way, the truth, the light. This is a line I have written on my Bible front cover with a pretty pen in fancy writing. And every time I take out my Bible now, I see those words. That the Christian way is the way, the way of truth, and the light of my life to help me see which direction I should be going.

For this reason I would like to be confirmed. To allow myself to have a closer relationship to God. So that He can be my light and show me the way.

Jill Ridgway

My name is Jill and I would like to tell you that spiritually and emotionally this is one of the best days of my life. It means so much to me to be confirmed into the Christian faith, to proclaim my love for our Lord, God Almighty and his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Max Rollinson

Since the earliest stages in my life, I have been taught what it means to be a Christian and a child of God at this school, actually, St. Alphege. However unfortunately my relationship with God slowly began to drift apart after leaving school because of new and exciting

challenges which we face as we grow up like getting a job. Only now I realise that these were just distractions and since rejoining the church I have been welcomed with nothing but open arms and immense support from people that I don't even know and more importantly thanks to you, I have been taught once more what it means to be a Christian. So today, I'd like to confirm my faith in God and to treat others with love, support and kindness, just as you have done so with me.

John Smith

My journey today and my confirmation began just over 3 years ago at the worst time of my life. My wife of 46 years had just passed away, very suddenly after a very short illness. But I was determined that I should give thanks for her life and our marriage at her funeral, but my grief was so overwhelming that I did not think I would be able to do it and I told Father Simon how worried I was that I would not be able to do this simple act. He told me to pray to God for the strength I needed. On the night before her funeral, I prayed to God asking for his help. When I woke in the morning, I felt relaxed, calm and refreshed, and I knew that my prayer had been answered and I was able to give the tribute at her funeral. Two days later I came to this church to give thanks. Here I found comfort, friendship and support. I felt truly I belonged here. I have come regularly to the 9.15 service, forging friendships and joining in activities, Sam Gibson's Men's Cooking Group and I have helped at Messy Church. I really felt I had come home and I knew I would never be alone again. Although I did not have my wife, I had God with me and I am so looking forward to the service today.

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A Letter to the Parish from Our New Director of Music and Organist Christopher Martin Thomas

D ear Readers,

Many thanks for my warm welcome here at St. Alphege.

It has already been a great pleasure to direct the Saint Alphege choirs, as I had to hit the ground running with some major services, and bigger yet to come with things like the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on December 19th. In this year's offering you will hear my own setting of 'The Infant King', and my wife Lorraine Norton's carol 'All praise to Christ our King', and well-known choral and congregational carols.

I also had the pleasure of presenting my Desert Island Discs at the Friends of St. Alphege Music event last Saturday evening. The weather and Covid kept many away, so for those that missed it, you can catch up with some of the music I presented, together with some other formative pieces that didn't quite make the list, on my Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000279565198> or
www.facebook.com/FriendsofStAlphegeMusic

Coming up next season the choirs start preparing straight away (after a well-deserved TWO Sundays off) for an *Epiphany Vespers* on Sunday 30th January at 5pm. The format will be one which I hope many will warm to: Recital - *Compline* (traditional language, Gregorian chants which congregation and choir sing together) - wine and cheese reception (with retiring offering).

The music will include familiar Epiphany music like Peter Cornelius's 'The Three Kings', Peter Warlock's 'Bethlehem Down' and William Mathias's 'A Babe is Born', and some of my favourite Tudor polyphony: John Sheppard's 'Rege Tharsis' and 'Verbum Caro', and Orlando Gibbons's 'See the Word is Incarnate'.

Our first Friday rehearsal on 7th January will be an open rehearsal from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m. - a good opportunity for adults to come and try out those vocal skills you neglected since school days, and for children and young people to join in a great choral experience. More about that in the church notices to come, but interest at this stage would be most welcome. Just email me at c.thomas@solihullparish.org.uk

Chris Thomas
Director of Music and Organist

St Alphege Church Choirs
invite you to an



OPEN REHEARSAL

ST ALPHEGE CHURCH

FRIDAY 7TH JANUARY
7.30 – 9PM

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Contact Chris Thomas,
Director of Music, to find out more and
to express your interest
c.thomas@solihullparish.org.uk



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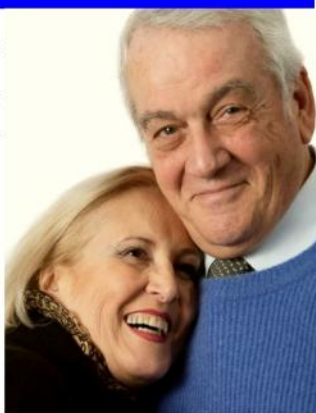
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Friends of St. Alphege Music

Desert Island Discs with Chris Thomas

On Saturday 4th December the Friends of St. Alphege Music hosted a social evening in the Oliver Bird Hall for members of the St. Alphege Choirs, the Friends and the Parish to meet our new Director of Music, Christopher Martin Thomas, and hear him talk about his life and his favourite music at an event modelled on the B.B.C.'s Desert Island Discs.

Chris began his programme with Schumann's piano concerto, a piece of music he heard at the age of eight, on his father's first stereo L.P. It was, Chris said, still his favourite piano concerto.

Bach is obviously one of Chris's favourite composers. *Bach's Double Violin Concerto* was the next choice and the first of four pieces by the composer. Chris was fortunate to hear this work live at the Royal Festival Hall at the age of twelve, played by Yehudi Menuhin and a pupil.

Next was Bach's motet, *Jesu Meine Freude*, which Chris first heard when he was eight, and which he said, "set in stone my love for Bach's choral music". He conducted it at his father's memorial service. *Truly this was the son of God* from the *St. Matthew Passion* and *Contrapunctus VII* completed his Bach choices.

Chris's love of Church Choral music was illustrated by his choice of Schutz's *O bono Jesu*, which he conducted at his Geneva Cathedral concert, Tallis's *Loquebantur*, Harris's *Bring us O Lord* and Sheppard's *Libera Nos*. He reminded the audience that Tallis was buried at St. Alphege's Church, Greenwich, the presumed site of his martyrdom.

Chris's choice of Byrd's *Ah Silly Soul* illustrated the concept of a Consort Song. He had discovered this idiom while studying for his M.Mus. at King's College, London. It combines the best of church and domestic music and is very accessible. He was so inspired that he proceeded to learn both the tenor viol, he was already a cellist, and the lute. This piece was a particularly melancholic example, like Dowland's lute songs.

The most modern piece in the programme was one very familiar to the St. Alphege Choirs, Howells's *Collegium Regale*. Composition was begun in March, 1944, and Chris wondered what stage the top secret planning for D-Day, 6th June 1944, had reached by then and what was in Howells's mind as he worked on composing music for the timeless texts of the Anglican liturgy, while Britain was still embroiled in a world war, which as far as the public could know, was far from over. Chris had first encountered Howells's music as an undergraduate at the University of Bristol, singing in the Wills Hall Chapel Choir, and it has clearly been a favourite since then.

The astute reader will have noted that Chris slipped eleven discs, rather than the customary eight, past interviewer and Chairman of the Friends, Nick Cahm. Asked about his book choice, Chris asked for a facsimile of some of Bach's works, which is newly published and costs thousands of pounds, and said he had chosen his island, also not normally allowed: Eel Pie Island in the Thames. Nick surrendered and immediately granted the luxury of Bristol Cream Sherry – though he did stipulate that only the tiny glass of it he then produced should be drunk, lest it impair Chris's concentration on Sunday morning.

Carol Southworth



Epiphanytide Vespers

Sunday 30th January, 5pm

A parish-wide service in St Alphege Church.

Recital – Compline – Cheese and Wine Reception.

Music to include:

'The Three Kings' – Cornelius,

'Bethlehem Down' – Warlock,

'A Babe is Born' – Mathias,

'See the Word is Incarnate' – Gibbons.

All are welcome – look out for details in the pew slip.



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May we seek to look to God for hope and strength,
May we seek to bond more closely with others of his household,
May we seek to count our blessings daily in a spirit of thankfulness,
May we seek to show Christ's light consistently in all we are and do,
May we seek to sow good seeds of harmony, kindness and peace,
by the grace of Christ, our Friend and Saviour.

Amen

Rev'd. John Bradford

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For Your Diary

Thursday 6th January : 1.30p.m. in the OBH.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

followed by a talk on *Nursing through the Years* with Alison Pratt.

Thursday 3rd February : 1.30p.m. in the OBH.

My Years at St Alphege - a talk by Michael Palmer.

We can arrange lifts to these meetings.

Contact Elaine (0121 705 3265), Pat (0121 705 8761) or Julia (0121 744 3540).

Subscriptions are now due and need to be in by the end of March. This year the subscription is £28 (less than last year!). We'll be collecting subscriptions at the next three meetings.

You can pay by cheque (your cheque **(MUST BE)** payable to **St. Alphege Mothers' Union**).

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The latest information is now on the parish website Mothers' Union page.

You can access this on www.solihullparish.org.uk/mothers-union and also from the website homepage top menu by clicking on **Connect** and then on **Mothers' Union**.

WIVES' FELLOWSHIP

The Monthly Lunch Club will meet on Friday 7th January, 2022. Please contact Carol Caldicott on 0121 705 3168 for further details.

Carol Caldicott



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